

Wisconsin Sharptail Grouse Status 2006

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Abstract

The total number of dancing males on the 9 managed tracts in Wisconsin increased from 114 in 2005 to 137 this year, indicating a 20% increase in the sharptail population since last year. The overall population has been on a gradual decline that started in 1999 (Figure 2). Survey efforts by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society in unmanaged habitats resulted in locating less sharptails in 2006, with a total of 196 birds found this spring compared to 215 last year.

Methods

Sharptail populations on managed properties were monitored by counting displaying males on dancing grounds. Male birds were identified by observations from blinds placed on dancing grounds with the aid of field glasses after approaching the dancing ground afoot or by vehicle. Complete census of display grounds was attempted on those properties designated as sharptail management tracts (Figure 1).

Sharptail surveys on private lands generally involved selecting one or more blocks of the best available habitat and then conducting listening routes along roads transecting those blocks. Those dancing grounds found within wildland habitat blocks were approached and all birds flushed from each site were counted, no attempt being made to distinguish sexes. Sharptail surveys on unmanaged lands were concentrated within a portion of northwestern Wisconsin, primarily in deer management units 2 and 9 (Figure 1).

These surveys are a cooperative effort between DNR, USFS, GLIFWC, Northland College, members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and volunteers.

Results

The 2006 dancing ground survey indicated a slight decrease in sharptail numbers on three managed sites including: Crex Meadows, Moquah Barrens, and Dike Seventeen. Properties that saw an increase in sharptail numbers include: Douglas County W.A., Kimberly Clark W.A., Namekagon Barrens, Pershing, and Riley Lake (Table 1). One survey, the Wood County W.A. was not completed this year.

Replicates of these traditionally surveyed areas are the most dependable index to changes in the sharptail grouse population.

Survey efforts by members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society resulted in a count of 196 birds in deer management units 2 and 9. This count was 9% lower than that obtained during a similar survey operation conducted in 2005.

Table 1. Sharptail Population Trends on Managed Lands.

| Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Management Areas from 1991-2006 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Property | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
| Crex Meadows W.A. | 126 | 47 | 53 | 57 | 86 | 110 | 117 | 132 | 111 | 112 | 73 | 61 | 61 | 53 | 49 | 38 |
| Douglas County W.A. | 5 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 20 | 16 | 11 | 12 | 20 | 21 | 14 | 15 |
| Kimberly Clark W.A. | 56 | 32 | 20 | 20 | 28 | 20 | 15 | 25 | 40 | 39 | 5 | 9 | 4 | n/a | 0 | 3 |
| Moquah Barrens W.M.A. | 6 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 21 | 14 | 17 | 34 | 40 | 36 | 19 | 35 | 29 | 14 | 7 | 6 |
| Namekagon Barrens W.A. | 28 | 25 | 16 | 25 | 39 | 44 | 54 | 65 | 43 | 24 | 9 | 21 | 42 | 25 | 19 | 42 |
| Pershing W.A. | 37 | 34 | 24 | 16 | 26 | 30 | 43 | 34 | 22 | ** | 19 | 13 | 3 | 16 | 11 | 16 |
| Riley Lake W.M.A. | 25 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 18 | 17 | 19 | 19 | 27 | 27 | 17 | 12 | 17 | 16 | 12 | 16 |
| Wood County W.A. | 54 | 13 | 11 | 16 | 19 | 18 | 10 | 17 | 18 | 6 | 0 | 8 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Dike Seventeen | 16 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 18 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 353 | 182 | 146 | 165 | 257 | 269 | 287 | 362 | 325 | 284 | 159 | 173 | 178 | 148 | 114 | 137 |

*Not a complete count of dancing males.

**A few dancing males were present.

Figure 1. Sharptail survey area, 2006.

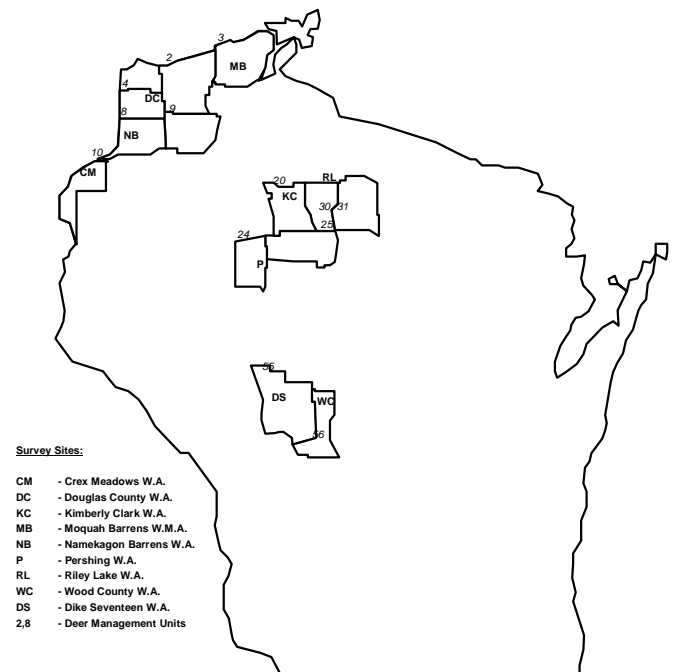


Figure 2. Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Management Areas from 1991-2006

